



National Transportation Safety Board

Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	Amagansett, NY	Accident Number:	ERA18LA157
Date & Time:	06/02/2018, 1433 EDT	Registration:	N41173
Aircraft:	PIPER PA 31	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The commercial pilot of the multiengine airplane was the first of a flight of two airplanes to depart on the cross-country flight, most of which was over the Atlantic Ocean. The pilot of the second airplane stated that he and the accident pilot reviewed the weather for the route and the destination before departing; however, there was no record of the accident pilot receiving an official weather briefing and the information the pilots accessed before the flight could not be determined. The second pilot departed and contacted air traffic control, which advised him of thunderstorms near the destination; he subsequently altered his route of flight and landed uneventfully at the destination. The second pilot stated that he did not hear the accident pilot on the en route air traffic control frequency.

Two inflight weather advisories were issued for the route and the area of the destination about 42 and 15 minutes before the accident flight departed, respectively, and warned of heavy to extreme precipitation associated with thunderstorms. It could not be determined whether the accident pilot received these advisories.

Review of air traffic control communications and radar data revealed that, about 5 miles from the destination airport, the pilot of the accident airplane reported to the tower controller that he was flying at 700 ft and "coming in below" the thunderstorm. There were no further communications from the pilot. The airplane's last radar target indicated 532 ft about 2 miles south of the shoreline. The airplane was found in about 50 ft of water and was fragmented in several pieces. Postaccident examination revealed no preimpact anomalies with the airplane or engines that would have precluded normal operation.

A local resident about 1/2 mile from the accident site took several photos of the approaching thunderstorm, which documented a shelf cloud and cumulus mammatus clouds along the leading edge of the storm, indicative of potential severe turbulence. Review of weather imagery and the airplane's flight path showed that the airplane entered the leading edge of "extreme" intensity echoes with tops near 48,000 ft. Imagery also depicted heavy to extreme intensity radar echoes over the accident site extending to the destination airport.

It is likely that the pilot encountered gusting winds, turbulence, restricted visibility in heavy rain, and low cloud ceilings in the vicinity of the accident site and experienced an in-flight loss of control at low altitude. Such conditions are conducive to the development of spatial disorientation; however, the reason for the pilot's loss of control could not be determined based on the available information.

Flight Events

Enroute - Windshear or thunderstorm
Enroute-descent - Loss of control in flight
Uncontrolled descent - Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's decision to fly under a thunderstorm and a subsequent encounter with turbulence and restricted visibility in heavy rain, which resulted in a loss of control.

Findings

Aircraft-Aircraft oper/perf/capability-Performance/control parameters-(general)-Not attained/maintained - C
Personnel issues-Action/decision-Info processing/decision-Decision making/judgment-Pilot - C
Personnel issues-Task performance-Use of equip/info-Aircraft control-Pilot - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Convective weather-Thunderstorm-Effect on operation - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Convective weather-Thunderstorm-Decision related to condition - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Turbulence-Convective turbulence-Effect on operation - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Ceiling/visibility/precip-Rain-Effect on operation - C

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight Instructor; Commercial	Age:	47
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Single-engine
Flight Time:	3000 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N41173
Model/Series:	PA 31 350	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Operator:	On file	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540-J2B
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KHTO, 56 ft msl	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 2600 ft agl	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	Calm / ,
Temperature:	22 °C	Visibility	7 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - Thunderstorms - Rain; No Obscuration		
Departure Point:	NEWPORT, RI (UUU)	Destination:	EAST HAMPTON, NY (HTO)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Latitude, Longitude:	40.571944, -72.074722 (est)		

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Daniel P Boggs	Adopted Date:	11/06/2019
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=97383		

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